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\$8.5 billion water plan unveiled Davis aims to help Delta, south state [excerpts]

By Jim Sams, Capitol Bureau Chief

SACRAMENTO -- ...State and federal officials may have fashioned a compromise among the key players, but they have yet to mop up all of the opposition. Some Delta farmers say the plan will jeopardize their irrigation supplies to satisfy Southern California water users, while some environmentalists object to proposals for major tax-funded reservoir projects that they believe will subsidize agribusiness.

Assemblyman Michael Machado, D-Linden, said many of the concerns by Delta interests were addressed during a negotiating session that started Wednesday and dragged on until early Thursday morning. Nevertheless, Alan Nakanishi of Lodi, his Republican opponent in the November contest for the 5th Senate District seat, quickly blasted Machado for selling out the Delta.

Nakanishi said in a prepared statement that the plan calls for removal of Woodbridge Dam, which holds back the popular Lodi Like recreation area. Nakanishi also said the plan includes a diversion near the town of Hood that many Delta water watchers regard as the first leg of a peripheral canal that they believe will allow the state to ignore water quality in the Delta by delivering Sacramento River water directly to the state and federal export pumps near Tracy.

Machado said Nakanishi's criticisms illustrates his opponent's lack of knowledge about the state's complex water issues.

The CALFED plan lists the Woodbridge Dam as one of many that may be modified or removed to ease salmon migration, but Machado said that is a reference to a request for CALFED funding by the Woodbridge Irrigation District to rebuild the dam with fish ladders. He said he would fight against any plan to remove the dam, and none currently exists.

The Hood diversion is listed as a potential project, but Machado said he

persuaded state and federal officials during last-minute negotiations to include language that requires CALFED to study other alternatives first.

During the announcement Friday, Davis named Machado as one of the key lawmakers who helped fashion a compromise. Machado said he supports the plan because it includes projects that will restore the Delta, improve San Joaquin County's water supply and clean up the San Joaquin River.

Specifically, the plan includes:

- * \$5 million for a Stockton East Water District pilot project to prove the feasibility of storing excess winter flows in the parched aquifer below eastern San Joaquin County.

- * A commitment by the state to improve water quality and flows in the lower San Joaquin River, which might enable sewer treatment plants in Tracy, Manteca and Stockton to evade expensive upgrades to keep their discharge permits.

- * Construction of barriers in south Delta channels that will prevent export pumps from sucking up the flows that farmers use for irrigation.

"Did we get everything we wanted here? No," Machado said. "We did get well over 50 percent of our concerns inserted (during negotiations). It provides that the Delta be protected and improved."